FINAL BILL REPORT
ESSB 6260

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Implementing efficiencies and programming changes in public education.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman and Wilson, C.; by request of Office of Financial Management).

Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: School Bus Purchasing and Reimbursement. School districts are responsible for selecting, paying for, and maintaining student transportation vehicles purchased by the district. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is responsible for developing categories and competitive specifications for school bus acquisitions as well as a corresponding list of school bus dealers with the lowest purchase price quotes. School districts and educational service districts that purchase buses through this competitive quote process or through a separate lowest-price competitive bid process are eligible for certain state funds based on the category of vehicle, the anticipated lifetime of vehicles of this category, and a state reimbursement rate. The accumulated value of the state payments received by the district and the potential investment return is designed to be equal to the replacement cost of the vehicle, less its salvage value, at the end of its anticipated lifetime.

The anticipated lifetime of vehicles is determined by OSPI, and is currently eight years for vehicles in category A, and 13 years for vehicles in categories C and D.

Running Start Enrollment. The Running Start (RS) Program allows students in grades 11 and 12 to enroll in participating public institutions of higher education and to simultaneously earn both high school and college credit. Students choosing to participate in the RS Program are responsible for applying for admission to the institution of higher education.

Students participating in RS programs may be funded up to a combined maximum

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enrollment of 1.4 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including high school and institution of higher education enrollment.

Transition to Kindergarten Program. In 2023, the Transition to Kindergarten (TTK) Program was established to assist eligible children in need of additional preparation to be successful kindergarten students in the following school year.

OSPI was directed to adopt rules for the administration of, the allocation of state funding for, and minimum standards and requirements for, the TTK Program. The rules must include specified minimum requirements for school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools operating a TTK Program.

School districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools operating a TTK Program must adopt policies regarding eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment for the TTK Program that, at a minimum, meet the requirements of the OSPI rules.

Funding for the TTK Program is calculated using the number of annual average full-time equivalent (AAFTE) eligible children enrolled in the program as specified in the omnibus appropriations act and based on portions of the prototypical school funding model. The current omnibus bill provides funding for 7266 AAFTE.

Local Effort Assistance. Under the Local Effort Assistance (LEA) Program, also known as levy equalization, the state provides additional funding to school districts at a disadvantage in raising enrichment levies due to low property values.

LEA is provided to any school district that does not generate an enrichment levy of at least $1,550 per student when levying at a rate of $1.50 per $1,000 of assessed value. An eligible school district's maximum LEA is the difference between the district's per pupil levy amount, based on a rate of $1.50 per $1,000 of assessed value, and $1,550 per pupil, multiplied by the district's AAFTE. Districts eligible for LEA that levy below a $1.50 per $1,000 rate receive LEA in proportion to their actual levy collection. The 2025-27 omnibus appropriations act provides an additional inflation enhancement for LEA, increasing the per-student threshold by $150 in the 2026 calendar year and $250 in the 2027 calendar year.

Student enrollment used to calculate LEA is reduced for school districts that have more than 33 percent of AAFTE enrolled in alternative learning experience (ALE) courses. The reduction is equal to the school district's FTE students enrolled in ALE courses, minus 33 percent of the AAFTE. To illustrate, if a school district has a total enrollment of 100 AAFTE students, and 50 of those students are enrolled in an ALE, then the total enrollment would be reduced to 83 students for purposes of LEA calculations.

National Board Certificate Bonuses. The National Board Certificate (NBC) is a voluntary certificate for teachers and school counselors that allows eligible candidates to demonstrate advanced knowledge, skills, and practice in 25 certificate areas. An annual bonus is

available to those with a current NBC, and the bonus amount is increased by inflation annually.

Summary: School Bus Purchasing and Reimbursement. Beginning with school buses that are scheduled for depreciation payments as of September 2025, and those qualifying for payments after that date, OSPI must use a minimum anticipated lifetime of 120 months—10 years—for category A buses, and 180 months—15 years—for category C and D buses.

In the 2025-26 through 2027-28 school years, for zero-emission school bus purchases, OSPI must adjust a district's reimbursement payments generated by the purchase by reducing the quote for that category of vehicle to 33 percent of the quote.

Running Start Enrollment. If SB 6346 (2026) is not enacted by June 30, 2026, students participating in RS programs may be funded up to a combined maximum enrollment of 1.2 FTEs, rather than 1.4 FTEs.

If SB 6346 (2026) is enacted by June 30, 2026, students participating in RS programs may be funded up to a combined maximum enrollment of 1.3 FTEs, rather than 1.4 FTEs, for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years.

Transition to Kindergarten Programs. OSPI must develop rules to prioritize TTK funding for the following:

- schools that already operate programs that serve the students listed below, and then those schools that are located within extreme child care access deserts;
- students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals or meet certain poverty metrics and lack access to licensed child care;
- students who are eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) or Head Start Program, but are not scheduled for enrollment;
- students who are eligible to receive special education; and
- students who are English learners or multilingual learners.

Funding for the TTK Program is limited to the amount of funding specified in the omnibus appropriations act and must be allocated based on the prioritized criteria developed by OSPI.

TTK children must be counted as kindergarten students for the purposes of calculating special education funding.

OSPI rules must authorize school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal compact schools to charge sliding scale fees for enrollment in a TTK program, except to children with disabilities entitled to a free appropriate public education and children who are eligible for but not yet placed in ECEAP or Head Start programs.

Beginning June 30, 2026 and annually thereafter, OSPI must report to the Governor and

Legislature on TTK program slot allotment for the upcoming school year. The report must include:

- the number of program slots funded;
- the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals during the previous school year; and
- whether the school district, charter school, or state-tribal education compact school is located within, or includes a zip code defined as, an extreme child care access desert.

Local Effort Assistance. Student enrollment used to calculate LEA is reduced for school districts that have more than 25 percent of AAFTE enrolled in alternative learning experience (ALE) courses, rather than 33 percent. The reduction is equal to the school district's FTE students enrolled in ALE courses, minus 25 percent of the AAFTE.

National Board Certificate Bonuses. The NBC bonus amount is no longer increased by inflation after the 2025-26 school year.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	25	24	
House	50	47	(House amended)
Senate	26	23	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 11, 2026
Contingent - Sections 5 and 6